

Chapter 19

The Role of Social Media in the Evaluation of Academic Degree Programs in Higher Learning Systems

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ABSTRACT

Social media has been gaining much popularity among youngsters and college-going students. It serves as a medium through which people share or exchange their ideas, opinions, and other forms of digital information. The most common way of describing social media is that it is a collection of websites and applications that provide a platform for exchanging or sharing content and is a part of social networking. Information and communication technology has revolutionized many sectors, including the education sector. The education sector, particularly due to its association with the tech-savvy generation, has witnessed a significant revolution in its functioning and operations due to the emergence of various social media platforms. These developments are slowly being adapted into the systems of the educational institutions. More schools and colleges have come to rely on information and communication tools and social media to improve student life.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become integral to our lives, shaping how we communicate, share information, and make decisions. Its influence has recently extended to education, particularly in selecting higher education programmes (Tripathi, 2023). With numerous prestigious colleges and universities consisting of a wide range of programme options, this paper discusses the factors that influence selecting a higher education

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programme. Understanding the behaviour of students is a complicated process, and much research has to be done to attain a reliable conclusion to get to know the way students make use of social media in higher educational institutions and how they use social media as a learning tool and not just for entertainment purposes (Dumpit & Fernandez, 2017). Consumer behaviour, business models, marketing strategies, and competition capabilities have changed with the increasing use of digital technologies, and educational organizations are no exception to the proliferation of digitalization. The prevailing pandemic has forced many Indian educational organizations to take the digital path (Poonam Chaudhari and Awesh Bhornya, 2022). Emerging technologies and the rise of social media have changed the teaching methods used by universities. The help of social media has made teaching more student-centred, as abundant resources are available online, and the students learn a lot (Vandeyar, 2020). Social media is vital in education and the college selection process, as the Internet has become affordable and a viable option for all people (Velmonte, 2023).

Unlike older times, students now look into several factors before selecting an institution for their higher education. Students search for information about the infrastructure, environment, location, facilities available inside the campus, scholarships provided, food, and benefits of being an alumnus (Saleh et al., 2024). Students usually unquestioningly trust organizations with a good reputation and a brand name that speaks for itself without questioning much about online information. Building a reputation is a long-term process and isn't done overnight. Both brand credibility and brand equity are important for any company to survive in the industry, and they are important factors for higher education industries as they show the value and the trust the consumers have in the institution, which directly affects admissions. Brand information provided by the alums and current students helps create better brand credibility as the information is more trustworthy, and the prospective students prefer such data (Mahadewi et al., 2024).

Similarly, strengthening the interaction by providing credible information helps turn prospective students into future students (Perera et al., 2022). Students usually aim to join such institutions where the competition is quite high and the enrolment process is quite strict. They use online and social media to help prepare themselves to get enrolled, and here, social media helps the students in the enrolment process as they can interact with and know the past experiences of alums so that they can prepare well. The influence of social media on students' decision-making process is quite strong in such cases, as students depend on social media to acquire all the information that will guide them in the selection process (Gupta and Singh, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is all the rage in the current period due to the increase in internet and social media usage. To attract people to their website, various social media marketing techniques have been used, such as using the name of the company in the website's URL, which makes it easier to be directed to their website, generating more traffic, thereby attracting more users, safeguarding the privacy and security of the users is the most important aspect in acquiring customers (Anjum et al., 2012). Attractive pictures of the university highlighting its infrastructure, the facilities provided by the university, the campus environment, the student life, the library, events held, the food served and so on are posted by the colleges on their social media pages to showcase their environment and what the students may get

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